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# WHERE DO WE STAND

by

George F. Kennan

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GENERAL BULL: You have heard a very fine tribute to our speaker this morning, far better than any of us could attempt. Certainly we concur in the sentiments. I am not going to attempt to introduce the speaker this morning. He is known to all of us, known very intimately to all of us in the National War College and the Industrial College. As a matter of fact, we consider him an ex officio member of the faculty. Probably his day in and day out contribution is as much as any of us make. So we will let him take over the rostrum, as he has already done, and let him proceed.

MR. KENNAN: General Bull, distinguished visitors, Admiral Hill, whose distinction I recognize but whom I will not include in the category of visitors in these walls, and gentlemen of the National War College and the Armed Forces Industrial College:

I think some of you have guessed that the passages which the Secretary of State just read to you were from the works of Justice Holmes.

It was Justice Holmes who used to say that the chief end of man was to form general propositions -- and he always added that no general proposition was worth a damn.

Any attempt to arrive at a total estimate of where we stand on the road of foreign policy partakes of the nature of a general proposition; and what Justice Holmes said about such general propositions is entirely applicable. The Secretary touched

on that.. It is simply not given to human beings to know the totality of truth. Similarly, no one can see in its totality anything so fundamental and so unlimited in all its implications as the development of our people in their relation to their world environment. In the Epistles of St. Paul, I remember, it was written that "We know in part, and we prophesy in part", and that is profoundly true of foreign affairs.

I sometimes like to think of the substance of human knowledge as a sort of sphere, and at the center of that sphere there must lie a core which is absolute truth. We keep charging into that sphere from various angles, knowing that we are always going to be deflected at tangents, like moths off the light bulb, before we get to the center. And yet, as Justice Holmes indicated, it seems to be our fate and our duty to keep on making those charges. And sometimes we seem to find substance for the hope that it is even useful.

The angle from which you undertake your vain charge into that sphere is what you call your approach to this subject. There can be many approaches.

In trying to decide which approach to take this morning, I reflected on what might be the main deficiencies of the ones we usually resort to when we try to think about this problem of foreign affairs. It seemed to me that the most frequent deficiency lay in a lack of depth in time--in a tendency to view all these problems as though the world,

like ourselves, had been born only yesterday--in a failure to add to our perspective that third dimension of time without which the work of the artist can be only primitive and naive. For that reason I thought I would ask you to bear with me this morning if we try to put our problem into a certain historical perspective, to impress upon ourselves the speed and the velocity with which many of the components of our situation have arisen and engulfed us, something of the seriousness of the set of circumstances which has resulted from that, and how profound and rapid an adjustment we are going to have to make if we are going to cope with this constellation of facts.

In a few days we will have completed the first half of the 20th Century. Let us think back two hundred years, and see what existed then of the elements of our problem today. Two hundred years isn't a very long time. Measured against the total span of civilization, it is only the briefest interval, six or seven generations, no more.

Russia at that time was still an archaic province of the portly Empress Elizabeth. It was a dark and barbaric little state, confined to the territory of European Russia just the way the American colonies were then confined to the eastern seaboard of the North American continent. The first Russian institute of higher learning had yet to be founded. That was the Moscow University. And at Elizabeth's court, gay and luxuriant as it was--I remember that the old lady had sixteen thousand dresses--not more than one-half of the courtiers could read and write, and they were the cream of Russia in culture and in education.

So Russia wasn't much of a force in the world at that time.

Here on this continent, there was only a string of colonial settlements, widely interspaced along the eastern seaboard. There was no Washington, D.C. at all. The frontier began at the edge of town. Even most of the territory of the present Georgetown was described in 1751 as "a wilderness plagued with wolves."

Paris was still the political center of the world, and Amsterdam probably its commercial center. The only hint of the present power relationships which have bothered us in our time was the fact that a few far-seeing Frenchmen were beginning to cast suspicious eyes on the rising Kingdom of Prussia, and wondering whether they would not have to depart from their traditional policy of regarding the Hapsburgs of Vienna as the only and greatest enemies of the Bourbon family,--whether they would not have to give a little attention to the Germans.

Let us skip fifty years. It is now the year 1800. There have been great changes everywhere. The world commercial center has moved over to England, perhaps the political center too. In France a revolution has taken place. It has plunged France into an inner political imbalance, or an inner political decadence, from which it is not destined to recover for at least another 150 years. It has sounded the death knell of the dynastic form of nationalism which had made Paris the political center of the world. It has released a new emotional force--the force of romantic nationalism--a new sort

of nationalism, based no longer on the power and glamor of the ruling princely family, but rather on the group instincts and loyalties of the individual, and particularly as they are related to the common bond of language. This new emotional force is destined to sweep over Europe with a truly revolutionary effect. It is destined, in the course of time, to disintegrate the multi-lingual empire of Austria and Hungary, to unite the 33 German-speaking principalities into a single dynamic state, and to leave France and the other seaboard countries of the European continent militarily outclassed, defensive-minded, clinging precariously and nervously to a bridgehead on the shores of the Atlantic, looking for their security to the powers of the Atlantic world which are at least conscious of having a stake in their survival.

In our own country, national independence, of course, has come. A remarkable group of statesmen have founded not only a frontier republic, but within it a foreign policy of great dignity and reserve, a policy of strict disengagement from the feudings and maneuvering of the older powers, a policy based on our geographic remoteness and perhaps on a certain healthy respect for the dangerousness of participation in the diplomatic intrigues of the European courts.

These early Federalists, Washington and Hamilton and the others, have just fallen from power, in 1800. The Jefferson Democrats are coming in. They are idealists, going even farther than the Federalists in their dreams of a detachment of this country from the power struggle of the world. These idealists are condemned, like most idealists who make the mistake of accepting responsibility, to go even farther than the cynics might have gone along the road of contest and empire, condemned to fight wars with the Bey of Tunis and the British and to go in for startling annexations of our own territory. But their motives go no further than to the rounding out of our power on the eastern and southern part of this continent, and the protection of our maritime commerce, which at this stage of our history is important to us. They still do not dream of any real involvement in the power relationships of the Old World.

But another thing has now happened in this year of 1800 which thoughtful people ought to note. Russia has now emerged from her obscurity, at least militarily, and she has appeared on the European scene as a major contestant. People in 1800 will remember that forty years before in the Seven Years War, while Braddock and Washington were marching to Fort Duquesne, Russian forces were already warring on German territory against Frederick the Great. These Russian

forces at that time occupied Koenigsberg, and they operated for many months in the triangle between Koenigsberg and Breslau and Berlin. Even now, as the 18th Century comes to an end, it sees Russian army corps deep in the heart of Europe, fighting with others against Napoleon. Suvorov has just completed his famous march into northern Italy and across the Alps, and is wintering with his forces in southern Germany. Another Russian army corps is operating in Italy, trying to persuade its allies to move against Malta. And a third is operating, strangely enough, with the British in the Atlantic area and is being forced to winter in the Channel Islands, where the British let them starve shamelessly, and they are the most unhappy Russians who ever ventured away from their native shores.

Of course, all of these incursions of the Russians into Europe have been made possible only by the disunity and the quarrels of the Europeans themselves. Against a united Europe, they would have stood no chance, as they would stand no chance today. But who said anything then, or now, in reality, about a united Europe?

Now let our pendulum tick off another fifty years. It is now the end of 1849, exactly one hundred years ago today. In Europe there has been an outward stability, but the disorders and uprisings of 1848 have shown how fragile that stability is. The Germans are groping energetically

for unity, and they are now close to it. They have just concluded a customs union; they have held a federal parliamentary convention at Frankfurt. They lack only the man. But that man is already living, and they will soon find him. His name is, of course, Bismarck.

In Russia, there has seemed to be a stagnation under the cold and heavy despotism of Nicholas I. But during these past fifty years, Russia has been through a lot. Russia has survived her first modern war, the Napoleonic invasion. Russian troops have been in Paris. Their officers have been infected by the virus of the new ideas emerging from the French Revolution. They have taken these ideas back with them into Russia, and they have sown the seeds of the revolutionary movement destined a century later to disintegrate the power of tsardom. Beneath the imposing iron crust of Nicholas' regime there is a great intellectual and artistic and political ferment going on, revealing for the first time what immense talents and what great emotional powers lie in this unhappy and backward people of Russia.

Here at home, our own country has been rapidly expanding and gaining power. The Mexican War and the California gold rush are just behind us. Our attentions have been absorbed with the rounding out of our power all over the continent. We are preoccupied with the domestic problem

of slavery, which is destined to place us before our greatest national test. Our foreign policy problems are still local and parochial. The day of world leadership and world responsibility still looks far off and implausible. It is true that we now have the Monroe Doctrine. That is a great step in advance. It reflects a sense of our growing strength, of our growing responsibility, of our interest in this hemisphere. But it is, after all, a negative policy, not a positive one. It is a defensive policy and not a forward one. It is a regional policy and not a global one.

Now let the pendulum tick off another fifty years. It is now 1900. The Industrial Revolution is in progress everywhere in the world. It is changing things everywhere. Perhaps as a consequence of it a demographic revolution is also beginning all over the world. It is as though the flood-gates of human fertility had suddenly been flung open. Mankind seems to have launched itself on a vast surge of the multiplication of its own kind, which threatens to outstrip food supplies and land and resources all over the world.

In Europe a German empire has finally emerged -- emerg d with great suddenness and in dazzling strength. The Germans have fought wars against the Austrians, the French and the Danes, and they have proven themselves the strongest military power on the continent. They are rapidly becoming a naval power as well.

Russia, having finally divested herself, as we did, of the outworn institution of human bondage, is now moving ahead with an accelerated pace economically and socially, industrializing herself, building a trans-Siberian railroad, completing her conquest of her continent as we have completed the conquest of ours. She is now enjoying an era of unprecedented political and ideological liberalism. But all this is beginning to strain her archaic paternalistic system of government. This system cannot adapt itself fast enough; it cannot educate people fast enough. It is still tied in many ways to its weird and barbaric past. Due to the fatal lapses in the speed of its development, it had to jump over too many phases to be a wholly balanced and healthy state. One of the most fateful of the ties which bind it to that past can be found in these little underground groups of political conspirators, unreconcilably embittered against all of the other elements in Russian society, who are now forging their unity and discipline under the leadership of a young man from the banks of the Volga who goes by the party pseudonym of Lenin. For during these 75 years since the Russian officers have come back from Paris, the Russian revolutionary movement has been through many phases, and it is divided basically into two groups, an important division: The group of those who recognize ethics as an imperative moderator of their conduct, who hope for a peaceful and

evolutionary development of democracy in Russia; and those others, the fore-runners of the early Bolsheviks, who consider that the end justified the means, and that only out of chaos and the bloody, violent destruction of the old order could anything positive be expected to emerge. And these latter are the ones who seem to have the discipline and the most desperate resolve.

Russia's eastward expansion has carried her to the Pacific and to China. She has obtained control of the Manchurian railroads by now, in 1900. She has, just at this moment, begun to fortify the port of Port Arthur, much to the indignation of the British, who understood she would develop it only as a commercial port.

Japan is beginning to emerge as a modern industrial and military nation. She and the Russians and the other great powers of the West are beginning to take advantage of the growing political weakness of China to pick off ports and concessions and spheres of influence.

We Americans don't like this. We too have now become a territorial power in the Orient through our recent conquest of the Philippines. We are no longer onlookers. But we want no part of this power struggle which is going on out there. Our acquisition of the Philippines was in large measure an unforeseen complication of our war with Spain. Many of us are slightly ashamed about it. We don't want to be expansionists.

We only want to do business. We wish international politics were out the window. Accordingly, we have just proclaimed a policy of the "Open Door" for China. We have asked everyone to lay off the development of special spheres of influence there. Here we have the beginnings of that unpolitical, juridical approach to the problems of international affairs, which has figured so prominently in our responses in the last half-century, and which is visible today in our attachment to such things as the ITO Charter--an approach which rejects the power struggle as a determinant of international events, which asks that politics stand aside and that international relations be restricted to the transactions of individuals under a set of juridical norms which will be at least fair, or not unfavorable, to our own citizens. In John Hay's policy of the Open Door, there is as yet no hint that we recognize our interests as being in any way involved by the issues for which people were contesting for spheres of influence and concessions in China. And the future is going to tell whether we are or whether we are not.

Here at home the "gay nineties" are at an end. Our economic power and prosperity are unprecedented. The Spanish War caused us no great national concern. As far as foreign affairs are concerned, we have a feeling of security, by and large, such as no nation has probably had since the high point of the power of ancient Rome. The ominous shadows of the rise

of Germany and of Russia don't seem to touch most of us. The recent financial panic has begun to make people thoughtful about the increasing complexity of our economic system, and of the demands which this is going to place on government in this country eventually. But only a few people, like the three Adams brothers, seem really to have caught the whole ominous significance of events abroad and events here at home.

Charles Francis Adams, the eldest of the brothers, finishing a life of successful activity in business, confesses to a shuddering apprehension of the problems which economic concentration and bigness are producing for our society.

His brother Brooks ponders the development of international trade and in this year 1900 he writes a small volume of the most amazing prophecy, to which no one at the time pays the faintest attention. He speaks of "that social system which promises at no very distant day to consolidate northern Europe and Asia in a nation hostile to the institutions of all external races." He points out that such a consolidation must threaten the very existence of England, in particular. "Should it prevail," he says, "her geographic position would become hopelessly eccentric"--thrown off its central balance--"and she would also be thrown upon the United States for food ... Great Britain may, therefore, not be

inaptly described as a fortified outpost of the Anglo-Saxon race, overlooking the eastern continent and resting upon America ... But if the United States is essential to England, England is essential to the United States, in the face of the enemies who fear and hate us, and who, but for her, would already have fleets upon our shores ..." He foresees the dollar gap and the problem of our surpluses. "England's most lucrative trade," he says, "today lies with the Far East; and if she is shut out there, her resources will be seriously impaired, and the money she no longer earns cannot be spent for food ..." Meanwhile, America "has been irresistably impelled to produce a large industrial surplus--a surplus, should no change occur, which will be larger in a few years than anything ever before known. Upon the existence of this surplus hinges the future ..."

Pointing to the military implications of the growing conflict between what he correctly describes as the Eurasian land power and the Atlantic sea power, and foreseeing the possibility of interruption of east-west trade as one of the vital problems of civilization, he comes to the conclusion: "The acceleration of movement, which is thus concentrating the strong, is so rapidly crushing the weak that the moment seems at hand when two great competing systems will be left pitted against each other, and the struggle for survival will begin. Already America has been drawn into war over the

dismemberment of one dying civilization; and it cannot escape the conflict which must be waged over the carcass of another."

And the third brother, Henry Adams, looking into the field of philosophy rather than into that of politics or economics, watches with fascinated horror the dizzy acceleration of progress in science, and even senses, amazingly enough, the challenge which is later to come to society in the release of the power of the atom. "Nothing so revolutionary," he writes, "had happened since the year 300. Thought had more than once been upset, but never caught and whirled about in the vortex of infinite forces. Power leaped from every atom, and enough of it to supply the stellar universe showed itself running to waste at every pore of matter. Man could no longer hold it off. Forces grasped his wrists and flung him about as though he had hold of a live wire or a run-away automobile ..." And he finishes his autobiography with a wistful and desperate hope against hope which he voices with the pathetic suggestion that "... perhaps some day--say 1938 ... " he and his friends "... might be allowed to return together for a holiday, to see the mistakes of their own lives made clear in the light of the mistakes of their successors; and perhaps then, for the first time since man began his education among the carnivores, they would find a world that sensitive and timid natures could regard without a shudder. ..."

I think it is a blessing for them that Adams and his

friends were not able to return in 1938 to see the mistakes of their lives made clear in the mistakes of their successors. And I think it is more of a blessing that they were not able to return in the year 1949. They would have seen now the fearful concentration of those storm clouds which they then discerned only dimly on the horizon. They would have learned that two world wars, centering around the inevitable bid of the Germans for leadership in Europe, had shaken the old continent to its foundations. They would have learned that in each of these wars, wisely or not, the United States had intervened, tardily but successfully, to prevent that German leadership from being established. They would have seen that while this intervention did save the seaboard nations, at least temporarily, from German domination, it could not prevent the progress of their disintegration as world trading powers. They would have seen that it left Germany prostrated and western Europe thus deprived not only of its unity but of the hard core of its potential military strength; because the German army had been to western Europe like the hair of Samson, and without it the continent was a helpless giant, dependent upon foreign support, delivered up to foreign influence and foreign inspiration.

And Adams and his friends would have found this weakness of Europe doubly disturbing to the United States by virtue of what had happened in Russia. They would have found the fall of tsardom had come too suddenly. The old order gave

out before the new order was ready. The interval had been seized upon and exploited by a group of fanatics whose minds had now groped as deeply into the possibilities of human evil as other men's minds have at times groped into the possibilities for human good. These fanatics had discovered a terrible fact about human nature--a fact as revolutionary in the field of politics as was the fission of the atom in the field of science--the fact that man can be ruled by the evil part of his nature as well as he can be ruled by the good part; the fact that human personality can be shattered and corrupted and remolded on a vast scale to suit the desires of the people who have charge of him; the fact that it is possible to create in the most literal sense a hell on earth and to prosper from the command of that hell; the fact that by the cynical and ruthless use of modern weapons and techniques it is possible to fix upon great peoples and nations shackles from which not even the greatest personal heroism and determination can liberate them alone. Now combining the pseudo-scientific emotional appeal of revolutionary Marxism with the power of the Russian state and the mystic belief of the Russian people in their ultimate destiny as the masters and teachers of the world, these Bolshevist leaders were able to link the interests of their power with what was going on abroad in the capitalist world, with the maladjustments of a capitalist world already in the throes of change and possibly in some

respects of disintegration, with the discontents of all the embittered and underprivileged elements there, and above all, with the restlessness and frustration of the western intellectuals and liberals, the people who sensed the way that man, as Adams had said, was being "flung about" by forces over which he had no control, and who were made desperate, and their vision beclouded, by their own inability to do anything about it.

In this way, the emotional sparks of Russian communism had begun to strike fire all over in the dry tinder of a changing, in some instances a disintegrating, order in the West, just as the revolutionary spark of Christianity had once struck fire among the under-privileged of the Roman Empire. This western world now found itself confronted, at a moment of maximum weakness, with a threat, the like of which had not been felt by any political society for two thousand years.

This was not all. The economic decline of the old maritime trading nations, which Brooks Adams had so brilliantly foreseen in 1900, had proceeded steadily and was now far advanced. It had been hastened and exacerbated by these two world wars. England and the continental seaboard countries had now been forced for long periods, as Adams foresaw, to lean upon the United States for support; and as they had become accustomed to leaning on us, we had become accustomed to having them do so. Yet very few of us were really aware of the nature of the habits that we were developing on both sides of the Atlantic.

We had been disposing of our surplus under a variety of stratagems and excuses to ourselves which left our people still, by and large, unaware of the real nature of the European dependence on us, and still more unaware of our dependence upon that European dependence upon us.

Thus militant communism, Russian communism, resentful of the West, contemptuous of western values, intent on the destruction of its institutions and on the enslavement of its peoples, found in the wake of World War II a situation which could not have been more favorable to its purpose: The bottom had fallen out of the western military strength with the occupation and demilitarization of Western Germany, the whole economy of the West was in a state of extreme and dangerous maladjustment. Many of the former colonial areas, due to a variety of causes, were in a state of open rebellion and bitterness against western authority. And when they were not expressing that bitterness, they were building their own industries and disrupting the patterns of trade that had made Britain and Western Europe economically great. The great peoples of Western Europe were dazed and weakened by the recent conflict with Hitler, bewildered by the vicissitudes which had befallen them, inclined to distrust their friends and their institutions and to question even the value of freedom itself.

And all this was complicated immensely by the skillful way in which the communists managed to capitalize on the <u>real</u>

deficiencies of the western democracies, as well as on the fancied and alleged ones: by the fact that many of the communist charges against us had a certain germ of truth in them together with a great deal of error. In combatting this, the western nations were partly combatting things in themselves. The challenge was not entirely an outside one. This called for great subtlety and for understanding of approach. The primitive reactions would no longer do. You couldn't handle this communist business by getting mad and beating drums and marching up and down. That only played into their hands. That was what they were trying to provoke us into doing.

So the crisis that befell this western civilization in the last four years was one of tremendous complexity. It was the crescendo of a vast and involved set of circumstances. It was partly a physical crisis, and partly one in the realm of ideas. It was partly something coming at us from outside, and partly something arising within ourselves. It was partly short-term and partly long-term. Part of its origins lay in the logic of the times; another part of them were fortuitous. Truly, no more complex and bewildering set of troubles ever descended at one time on any cluster of human societies. And I don't need to remind you that the lion's share of the responsibility for finding the answers, as well as for providing the wherewithal for giving reality to those answers, fell on that member of the group which was the strongest, the richest, the

least damaged by the war, and the most secure, and probably the least prepared by tradition and history--namely, ourselves.

Gentlemen, reflect a moment what that means. We, who today have this responsibility, are only a generation away from the simplicity, the security, the total unawareness of the turn of the century. Many of our own personal lives go back into the sort of Booth Tarkington innocence of the American middle class in the days before World War I:--the shady streets and the wooden houses and the backyards in which the kids played at cowboys and Indians. The ideas about foreign affairs with which our generation was originally equipped were ones which had emerged from a hundred years of unparalleled and intellectually debilitating security. They were more than out-of-date. I think we have to recognize now that in many respects they were childish and naive. And instead of allowing us to return a hundred years into the past, into a set of circumstances where these ideas might have had some validity, reality has driven us remorselessly a hundred years into the future in the brief span between our boyhood and our maturity.

I say this to you not to indulge in self-pity, for which life finds no more forgiveness in the affairs of nations than it does in the affairs of individuals. I say it rather to expose the full measure of the seriousness of our situation.

We are today, in this nation, like a young person from a wealthy family who has suddenly lost his parents after

a sheltered bringing-up, and now finds himself on his own for the first time in an unmerciful and inconsiderate world. We are the rich orphans of our time; and in our surroundings we must expect to find much of the envy, the malice, the dependence, and sometimes even the subtle obsequiousness with which the rich orphan is traditionally surrounded. The problems of maturity have caught us ill prepared. We have to grow up, fast. We stand or fall today with our ability to mature with our troubles and to learn to cope with responsibilities for which no education has ever prepared us.

Now the subject of this talk was "Where Do We Stand Today"--and the reason for this broad historical wind-up was to show that the answer to this question depends primarily on where it is you think we have come from, and where you think we are going.

There are those who persist in viewing our problem of foreign affairs solely in the light of relations with Russia--who think of it as a sort of one-time, dramatic duel between the two systems--a contest in the face of which all other considerations must be put aside as we put aside during the recent war all those things we considered irrelevant to the immediate military struggle. For these people, things are simple. Here are we. There is the enemy. We are right. They are wrong. Some day there will be a climax. One of us will win and triumph. The other will be defeated. And the one who wins will move on

into a dim nirvana of victory, into a vague "live-happily-ever-after" world like that which is implied by the final embrace on the movie screen or the grand finale of the classical ballet--a world of relaxation, in which all serious problems will be over and what remains is only a minor mop-up process.

This, of course, is the easy view of foreign policy. It goes back to the most primitive and familiar of human reactions. By the same token, it provides the most lenient measuring stick of our progress. And yet, even if you take this measuring stick and apply it to the realities of today, I think you can only shrug your shoulders. Moscow has suffered political reverses in Europe; it has had political successes in Asia. By and large, the men in the Kremlin must be slightly less cocky today than they were four years ago about the time-table for the realization of their objectives (of course, they never doubt the final outcome) but only slightly less cocky if at all. They see many rifts and deficiencies in the western world which still give them strong hope for the future. And if they are thoughtful about this (and I believe they are) they will realize that their principal reverses--those things which some of us are inclined to view as western victories-- have been the result not of any brilliant diplomacy on our part but of their own communist mistakes: their mishandling of the Marshall Plan

approach, the over-playing of their hand in the western communist parties, and above all, the staggering and fateful error with respect to Yugoslavia, which must have shaken their confidence ten times more than anything we ever did to them. These, as I say, were their mistakes, not our successes; and they know, as good communists, that your own mistakes are something you can study and correct, whereas the formidableness of an adversary is not.

So measured even against this over-simplified and indulgent yardstick, I cannot see that our progress to date could be any grounds for complacency on our part. Actually, as you know, there is a broader way of looking at the problem of this nation in international affairs than that. I think this backward glance at history has shown pretty well what it is. Viewed from this broader angle, there is a great crisis hanging over all of western civilization. This crisis is nothing outside of ourselves. It is all around us and within us. We ourselves are a part of it. It is the crisis produced by the growing disproportion between mans moral nature and the forces subject to this control. Overpopulation, urbanization, industrialization, economic bigness, the wastage of natural resources, these are all at the heart of this problem. It is something which embraces the dollar gap and the American surplus, and the timidity of the European democracies about themselves and their own political system, and the inability of the Europeans

to make themselves comp[illegible]e, and the confusion that prevails with them and with us as to the respective roles of the state and of individual initiative in the economic process. For us in this country the problem boils down to one of obtaining a social mastery over the run-away horse of technology: of confining and bending to our will those forces which Adams said are now flinging us about by the wrist; of creating here at home a stable balance between consumption and resources, between man and nature; in producing here institutions which would demonstrate that a free society can govern without tyrannizing and that men can inhabit a good portion of the earth without devastating it and without pauperizing themselves; and then, armed with this knowledge, this secret, which would be truly revolutionary, going forth to see what we can do in order that stability may be given to all of the non-communist world, that some order and sense may be introduced into the relationships between populations and industrial tools and resources and territory, and that the free man finally gains the possibility not only to live economically, but to unfold those gifts of artistic and intellectual creativeness which are the real compensation for his innate orneriness and stupidities and the real justification for his effort to stand up and walk like a man and not on all fours.

This is the real problem of western democracy. Communism has a relationship to it, but only the relation of the

complication to the disease. It is a serious complication. It could in certain circumstances become more acute, more immediately dangerous than the disease itself. I grant that. But the two are not to be confused. We will not cure the disease by treating the complication alone. And we should not get too violently indignant over the fact that such a complication exists. As one of my associates recently said: "If it had never existed, we would have had to invent it, to create the sense of urgency we need to bring us to the point of decisive action."

Here, then, is our real problem of policy--our problem of national policy--of which foreign affairs and defense are only a part. It will never be entirely understood or entirely solved. It is not necessary that it should be. What is necessary is that we should make a beginning toward its understanding and its solution. Unless we do that, we in the State Department will have nothing to seek; and you in the Services will have nothing to defend.

Measuring progress against this yardstick, I think we must recognize that we are only at the merest beginning, and seriously and alarmingly behind schedule. The progress chart to date consists mostly of the record of things we haven't done.

Technologically we are still an uncontrolled economy. We don't know yet where we are being carried, in what ways our living patterns are yet going to be changed and distorted by

new inventions and new industrial developments. We have not yet produced a balance with our own natural resources, and we have no serious plans to do so. We are not yet prepared to adjust our economy to the obvious requirements of the other nations in the non-communist world, whose prosperity and independence we are striving to assure. To do that, we would have to be prepared to reduce our tariffs and subsidies, to swallow a part of our national surplus, and to do a number of other things which many of us would regard as unpleasant and out of the question. We have not solved the problem of the great ex-enemy territories which we have taken under our control and production. We have not yet found the means to bring those peoples into the free world as hopeful and respected citizens, in order that they may not have to be abandoned to the world that is not free. That is not all our fault. Our allies bear a great part of the responsibility for that, and I think our own record is creditable, but I am speaking here about the western world as a whole. We have not found a medium of communication, a language, with which to speak to the backward and poverty-stricken peoples of the world, particularly those in the Orient, which would gain for us their respect and confidence and arouse their awareness of what they stand to lose by selling their birthrights of newly-won independence to the forces of modern totalitarianism. I am afraid we have not yet found a satisfactory system of living together

for people of different color in our own country which would make possible a fully satisfactory and fruitful and hopeful relationship between ourselves as a nation and the colored peoples in other parts of the globe.

Now all these things are ones which we usually think of as outside of and remote from the cold war. I think you would be justified in saying to me: "This is all very well but most of these are domestic problems. We have responsibility for them, but we have responsibility only as individuals, not as Government officials. But it is as a Government official to Government officials that you are speaking to us now. How about our responsibilities as officials? How about the cold war for which all of us bear a direct responsibility? We have, after all, the ERP, and the Atlantic Pact, and the arms program. We are making a tremendous effort now to face up to the problems of the economic and military weakness of our western European allies, and to correct at least that deficiency in the non-communist world. And that is our real competence."

Gentlemen, I concede all that; and I look back with no shame, with no dissatisfaction, on the record of this country in handing that problem in the last four years. But the very intensity of our effort along these lines bears with it certain serious dangers, and no statement of where we stand today would be complete without a reference to them.

In the first place, there is the danger that we make

the mistake I have referred to earlier and permit ourselves to regard the cold war as an end in itself, as a one-time contest with an enemy who is wholly an outside enemy. It is vitally important that we recognize this phase of our foreign policy as a sort of fending-off operation, by which we hold one adversary at bay while we deal with an internal enemy who is all around us and within us. We can recognize that these two adversaries have a link, and what helps one helps the other. We can recognize that by direct action we have a good chance of fending off this one who is over in Russia. But we also have to recognize, at least it is my own belief, that our real victories over him, the ones that really count, and the ones that are going to be decisive, will have to be registered in this struggle within ourselves in our own western world.

There is the greatest danger that we may be tempted to do things in our battle with our outside adversary which will give aid and comfort to our inside one. I know that that has been said to you here in these lectures. I ask your forgiveness for saying it again, but I think its importance is tremendous. If we do that, if we go too far in adopting the methods of communism as our own, the communists can afford to take philosophically such reverses as this may cause them on the external front, for they will know that what they have gained under the surface is more important than what they have lost on top. I am not arguing here for a "soft" policy toward communism,

or toward Russia. I am not arguing for any relaxation of the cold war. I am saying that the real distinction between a liberal democracy and a totalitarian dictatorship lies only in the matter of method, not in the matter of aim, and that if the communists can induce us to make their methods our own, then we have lost, whether or not they have won; for that distinction of method is really all that we have to fight for.

And these are not just the views of a confused western liberal. I want to read you some words recently written by a former member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow--a man who long since broke with the communists, but whose schooling was among them, and who knows them as few foreigners do:

> "Error is always the result of a defeat suffered by truth on its own territory, so that every attempt to fight error as if it were born beyond the frontiers of truth, every attempt to treat error as a clan treats its external enemy, not only fails as a matter of course but prevents the application of the only effective remedy. Error must, in a word, always be regarded as a crisis in the internal development of truth."
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> ...
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> "The Communists are bent upon suppressing freedom, and the remedy, we are told, is to pay them off in their own coin. This, I say, is precisely the kind of victory the national community can never afford. The state and the nation, much more easily than the individual, can forego in large part the arbitrament of hand-to-hand combat, and take the long view. If by choosing the longest and hardest road it can avoid contamination by the spirit and methods of its internal enemy, it is always well advised to do so. And it is no answer to this to show that methods borrowed from the enemy will bring quicker results, save as we are sure--which in practice we cannot be--that we are not installing

him permanently in our midst and delivering him our souls."

Our second great danger is that because the cold war requires on our part a formidable military posture, such as we have never before tried to maintain in time of peace, we will unconsciously embrace the assumption that a war so much prepared for cannot fail to be eventually fought, and that in our preoccupation with a military contest which we are constantly forced to conduct in our imaginations we will forget to do those things which might still keep such a contest from becoming a living reality.

It would be a great shame, gentlemen, if this were to occur. No one wishes more fervently than I, nor on the basis of more bitter personal experience, for the end of communist power in Moscow. But I deeply doubt that the result of a third world war can be a really happy one from the standpoint of this country, whatever our military successes; and I would rather wait thirty years for a defeat of the Kremlin brought about by the tortuous and exasperatingly slow devices of diplomacy than to see us submit to the test of arms a difference so little susceptible to any clear and happy settlement by those means.

These are the great dangers which I think confront us in the conduct of the cold war operation which is our combined responsibility. I think by recognizing these things, by putting the cold war into its proper place in our thoughts without

questioning its urgency or its necessity; it should be possible for us to improve on our performance to date; it should be possible for us to make a greater effort than we have heretofore made to unravel and to master the confusing dialectics of the use of power as an instrument of national policy. We can acknowledge that this is one of the weakest points in our national arsenal. The responsibility of leadership lies squarely upon the armed services and the Department of State. It is our task to teach ourselves and our people how armed force can be maintained in the democratic society without becoming an end in itself and without becoming a determinant of national policy; how that force can be preserved and nurtured and developed and wielded to the end that it may never have to be used; how, if its use cannot be avoided (and we must admit that does not lie entirely with us), it can be employed in ways the least corrupting to ourselves and the most considerate of those values elsewhere whose preservation is essential to the purposes of democracy.

This last is particularly important, because if there is any single lesson which I hope you are taking with you from this course of lectures, it is the importance of method rather than objective, of the "how" rather than the "what", in the workings of a democratic society. There is little that any of us can do, as individuals, about the instincts and impulses which dominate our individual conduct. The same, I am afraid, is true of nations. What we can do is to place modifications

on the methods by which we act. Civilization seems to prosper best when men cease to preoccupy themselves too much with the question of purpose, and begin to apply restraints and rules of the game on the means by which these purposes are sought. Viewed in this light, national policy in both foreign affairs and defense becomes outstandingly a question of form and of style and of principle. Three years of preoccupation with the work that is called policy planning work have left me deeply impressed with the fact that few of us can see very far into the future, and that we are, perhaps, safer if we take principles of conduct which we know we can live with, and at least stick to those, than if we try to chart out vast schemes of campaign which may turn out in the end to have been unrealistic.

In these points, gentlemen, lie some of the great appreciations which can rescue us from our bewilderment and our dilemmas at this time. Another lies in the sort of thing you have been doing in this hall during the past three months: in the application of the sober and unramatic process of scholarly analysis to all the intangibles, all the imponderables, all the elusive, shifting relationships of national policy.

Now I can imagine there have been times when this has been hard for you. I can imagine that there have been times when you would have liked to toss all the political scientists out the window--ourselves included--and throw them into the

Potomac; times when you would have liked to exclaim, with the bored and frustrated bearded statesman of the New Yorker cartoon: "Ah, to hell with it. Let's have a war."

Well, you don't need to feel this way. The reward for intellectual struggle lies primarily in the doing rather than in what appears to be the achieving. But that reward is always there, and it is never inadequate. I think perhaps that is what another American, Thoreau, meant when he wrote one of those beautiful and cryptic little passages, the significance of which only sinks in on you with the course of time.

> "... our darkest grief has that bronze color of the moon eclipsed. There is no ill which may not be dissipated, like the dark, if you let in a strongerllight upon it ..."

Thank you very much.

GENERAL BULL: Mr. Kennan, I want to speak not only for the War College, but for all the gathering here this morning, and thank you for this very profound, very impressive, and, I must admit, somewhat disturbing presentation. I think it is quite typical of the very great contribution we always get from Mr. Kennan. He gave us a kick-off four months ago, started us off when we were completely ignorant, and now he has run ahead and caught his own punt and tells us where we are today. I am very grateful to you, sir.

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